



**ENEA FERRARI**

**1908–1972**

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### **ENEA FERRARI**

Ferrari started to paint at an early age under the guidance of his father, Annibal Ferrari and attended the Art College of Brera between 1924–1928. Returning to Soncino (province of Cremona) after his father's death, Ferrari became an artisan in stuccoes and fresco-painting. From 1932, having perfected his plaster skills at the Scuola Superiore d'Arte of Milan, and having taken part in the Mostra Provinciale di Cremona, his works became increasingly informal. These works were shown in January 1934 in a solo exhibition at Bottega d'Arte Giano in Soresina, but did not meet the success expected. However, the same year the artist pursued with abstraction and experimented with composing artworks with natural elements such as bark, corn, rope, twine and wood-shavings. Ferrari participated in solo and group exhibitions in Italy and solo exhibitions at Galerie M Bochum, Galerie Loehr and Galerie Ernst in Germany.

# the myth of the noble savage

Making Enea Ferrari out to be the master of Piero Manzoni, claiming his priority in the moralizing tone of one who grieves over the praises given to the pupil and the silence to the master are examples of critical absurdity. Here is why: there are artists for whom experimenting is a psychophysical necessity which develops in silence and in underground conditions like a germinating process; they move outside of the coordinates of culture which emphasizes the incidence of ideas on a given moment in history, by obeying instead a natural and pressing need; to them the “avant-garde” is not an ideological choice, an invention or an elaboration of forms or ideas; but coincidence, a state of grace or, at the most, the discovery of a buried secret already in existence. It is then perfectly clear why Piero Manzoni (like Klein) is considered a forerunner of the “avant-garde” and Enea Ferrari, who no doubt preceded and inspired him, occupies a different place; because Manzoni places himself on the side of culture which causes and gives rise to movements in history whereas Ferrari is on the side of nature; and it is because the material was primitive and spontaneous that Manzoni drew from those precious natural sources, elaborating them within a semantic area that bit into a more restless and dangerous present. Working in the direction of “avant-garde” as culture, one invents and produces history; placing oneself on the side of nature, one discovers, evinces and, possibly, acquires the knowledge of things, facts, places previously ignored; instead of inventing history one discovers it. Bringing up Lévi-Strauss’ famous emblematic polarities (raw and cooked; honey and ashes; naked and clothed), artists like Enea Ferrari are “naked” and “raw”, i.e. they allow the survival — in the art of technology, the city and social order — of data not yet corrupted by what Freud has termed paradigmatically the “disease of civilization”. He could be symptomatic of structural thought as opposed to sequential thought, of an “analytical motivation” as opposed to a “dialectic motivation” whose epistemic key is established precisely upon those diachronic-analysis processes of history and “avant-garde” which Structuralism tends to neutralize.

When Enea Ferrari states that he was held “spellbound by the un-achieved”; when he displays his polymaterial choices elaborated since 1934; when instead of forms he uses “corn bracts, the bark of trees, wood-shavings,





cork, ropes”; when he deliberately brings all colours down to white, he supports this argument because the un-achieved is, symbolically, the cosmogonic principle of the world; matter is the prime source; wheat, bark, cork and snails are nature and part of nature’s exponentiality; the colour void is that voluntary blindness urging towards a global and “structural” perception of the world, instead of a sort of visual and rational knowledge; finally, as Calvesi points out, white is “sperm, milk, breast, mater-materia, white substance is then obviously still the cloud of origin; but white is also surface, indefinite space, light, amalgam...” (Flash Art, n. 25-26, 1971). These anchorites of the mind oppose the assault of experience and history with their inner world which, in the desperate search for ultimate formal characteristics and endless justifications of reality as a whole, acts as a cooling-system against all the pressures and exterior messages such as to give rise to a kind of mental **rigor mortis** impeding the de-tribalisation process typical of the specialist technologies of vertical thought and “avant-garde”. Enea’s counter-strategy (as in the case of other such solitary spirits — who do not own themselves to be historically conditioned — whom it would be mistaken to frame into the context of Naïve painting which is an unconscious and fancyful negation of history, whereas people like Enea are deliberately beyond history) lies in opposing the mechanist and causal principle, along whose lines the “avant-garde” moves, with the organic and cosmogonic myth. By definition, the concepts of myth and organic unity presuppose a still or synchronic time and, respectively, a mental and natural space where the “avant-garde” is conditioned by the illuministic dialectic of a growing process which is rigorously diachronic and sequential.

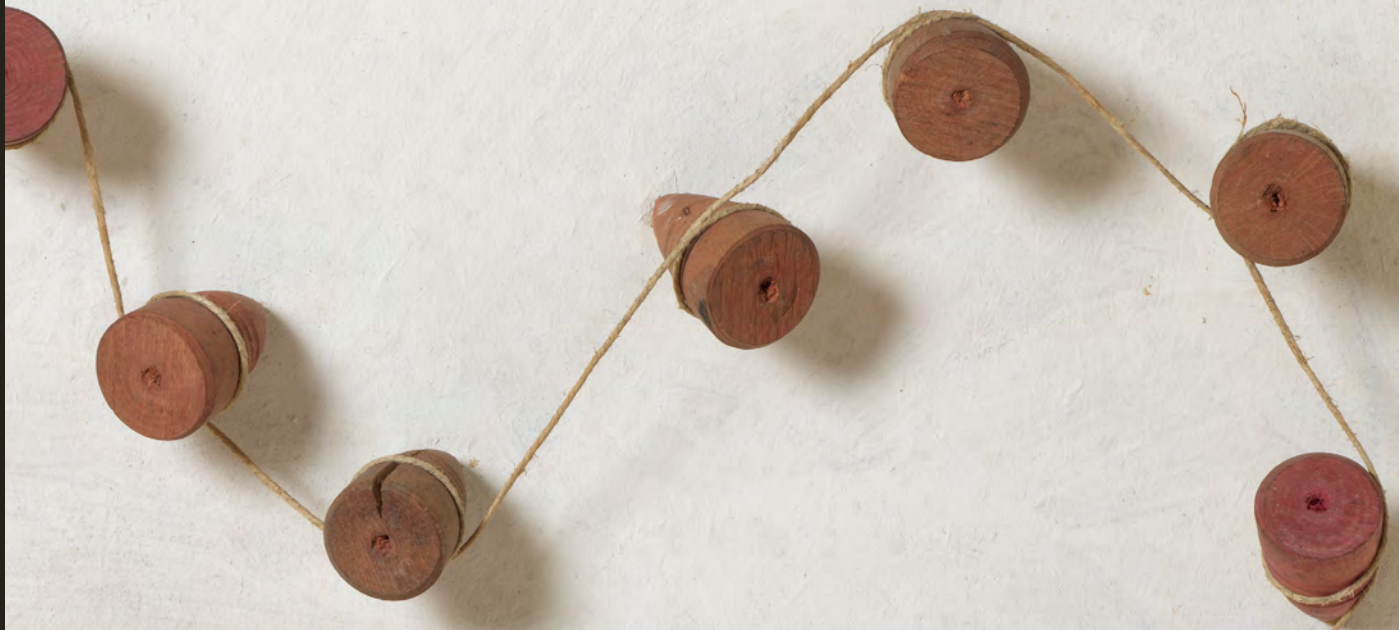
All that which in the “avant-garde” develops and explodes, contracts and implodes within the natural organic dimension. Moreover Enea strongly proves his organic and spontaneous bent by displaying the absolute lack of an evolutive semantic context; his art is a sum of absolute emblematic conditions within which no intention of demystifying art is to be found nor wish to oppose a different and vital weltanschauung to an obsolete and corrupt one. On the contrary, it is clear that he deals with problems and offers solutions by leaving messages according to modes typical of oral societies; thus the message is repeated again and again on the loops of a concentric spiral (which, to quote Villa, is the spiral of the “uni-verse, i.e. the homogeneous”) with obvious redundancy and its effect is a total effect which does not take into consideration the content of one single message but sets itself out to be the whole of expression and deep involvement, with brief moments of wild hallucinatory sense awareness.

The blinding whiteness, the temptation of plaster as **natura naturans**, and as the archetype of handycraft, the dipping of a greedy hand into the disquieting tactileness of corn grain, the abrasions, the wheat-growing fields; the space, not as a symbolic form or a rational reduction of

the real but as a bio-physical immersion into sensorial consciousness, all show explicitly a refusal to dialogue with the evolving outside world and an attempt to fill in and complete the senses by a total immersion into the cyclic and cosmogonic flow of reality. They represent the choice of natural order over social order, of the primitive over the corrupt, of structure over sequence, of data over value, of signs over language. Whereas the informal was an existential conflict between the "I" and the world, a thickening of the mundane and a probing into the blood and sensual substance of man intended as earth, flesh and blood, yet locked into the absolutist, saturated, hopeless and caging individuality of the I-here-now; one meets in Enea a limbo of the "I" acting occasionally as an agent through which the universe of things and forms is filtered yet taking part in the rythm of the things of the world. Therefore he does not investigate experience nor does he attempt to draw up a method to communicate it to others; he simply lives it, yet leaving the proofs of his personal experience in that wealth of gestures, signs, traces, things, bodies forming his emerging as object and his denial of art, as well. Argan has written that "the substitution of a thing by its value is an easy game called civilization"; this is why Enea insists on the thing as being the tautological evidence and indication of itself or **being**, at the most the indication of a former, primary, archetypal, cyclic and cosmogonic meaning; and not the indication of a value (or non-value) as for Manzoni whose research is conditioned precisely by the radical substitution of thing by value, by the decodification of the sign as mere indication of value or of causality and of pure investigation, rather than as indication of experience or of causality.

**Italo Tomassoni**





The discovery of the informal, made at an incredible date by the painter Enea, came about through the love of an ancient and elementary technique, stucco-work; passing nearly imperceptibly, between 1932 and 1934, from an ambiguous figuration suggested among the wriggles and dents in the white agglomerate, then reduced down to a breath, a rustle, then definitely forsaken to delight in the vaguely naturalistic play (as will be typical of the informals), choppy sea or lunar surface, of rippings, whirlpools, of the stick's dexterous arrest. Enea is obviously tied by an umbilical cord, by an ancestral tic of the finger-tips to stucco to him "raw" material as God's clay, the excrements of freudian new-born babies or stercoraries, the stone of the Lecce baroque, wax, the image of a chaos over which, though, order will come: the paged, the rake: bands, squares, clever combings, interruption and frequency plays, Stucco, albarium opus, is not only material but also colour, white colour and even when Enea is no longer spurred by the tic of stucco, he is by white, which is no longer a tic of the finger-tips but of the eye, still of psychic origin, a choice of deep identification. Sperm, milk, breast, mater-materia; white matter is then obviously still the cloud of origin; but white is also surface, indefinite space, light, amalgam and, while colours qualify and localize, white seems to disperse: a-chrome, as his most attentive critic, Piero Manzoni, has defined it.

MAURIZIO CALVESI

## PLATES





Provenance:  
Gianni Malabarba collection, Italy  
Signed and dated lower right; signed and dated with archive no. 2150 on reverse

*Untitled*  
1934  
Plaster on board  
63 x 46 x 1 cm  
24  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 18  $\frac{1}{8}$  x  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches



Provenance:  
Gianni Malabarba collection, Italy  
Signed and dated lower right; signed and dated with archive no. 2115 on reverse

*Untitled*  
1934  
Plaster on board  
48 x 69 x 0.5 cm  
27  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 18  $\frac{7}{8}$  x  $\frac{1}{8}$  inches



Provenance:  
Gianni Malabarba collection, Italy  
Signed and dated with archive no. 2010 on reverse

*Untitled*  
1934  
White plaster on wood  
130 x 72.5 x 5.5 cm  
40 ½ x 28 ½ x 2 ¼ inches



Provenance:  
Gianni Malabarba collection, Italy

Literature:  
*ENEA*, Flash Arts Publishing, Rome, 1972, ill. p. 116-117  
Signed and dated lower right; signed and dated with archive no. 1090 on reverse

*Untitled*  
1938

Plaster on wood  
33.5 x 57.5 x 2 cm  
13 1/8 x 22 1/2 x 3/4 inches



Provenance:  
Gianni Malabarba collection, Italy  
Signed and dated lower right; signed and dated with archive no. 1884 on reverse

*Untitled*  
1945  
Plaster on board  
49 x 40 x 0.5 cm  
19 ¼ x 15 ¾ x ½ inches



Provenance:  
Gianni Malabarba collection, Italy  
Signed and dated with archive no. 1709 on reverse

*Untitled*  
1954  
White painted corn bracts  
50 x 23 x 2 cm  
19  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 9 x  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches



Provenance:  
Galerie Whiterouge, Maastricht, The Netherlands  
Signed and dated on reverse

*Untitled*  
1954

White painted bark on board  
31 x 53 x 3 cm  
12 ¼ x 20 7/8 x 1 ½ inches



Provenance:

Gianni Malabarba collection, Italy

Literature:

*ENEA*, Flash Arts Publishing, Rome, 1972, ill. p. 116-117

Signed and dated with archive no. 2073 on reverse

*Untitled*

1954

White painted bark on board

50 x 71 x 4 cm

19  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 28 inches





Provenance:  
Gianni Malabarba collection, Italy  
Literature:  
*ENEA*, Flash Arts Publishing, Rome, 1972, ill. p. 38-39  
Signed and dated with archive no. 1739 on reverse

*Untitled*  
1957  
Bobbin and twine assemblage on board  
60 x 75 x 10 cm  
23  $\frac{5}{8}$  x 29  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 4 inches



Provenance:  
Gianni Malabarba collection, Italy  
Signed and dated lower right, signed and dated with archive no. 1140 on reverse

*Untitled*  
1959  
Plaster on board  
35 x 52 x 0.5 cm  
13 ¾ x 20 ½ x ¼ inches



Provenance:

Gianni Malabarba collection, Italy

Literature:

*ENEA*, Flash Arts Publishing, Rome, 1972, ill. p. 47

Signed and dated lower right, signed and dated with archive no. 2276 on reverse

*Untitled*

1960

Handmade nails on board

54.5 x 62 x 10 cm

21 ½ x 24 ¾ x 4 inches



Provenance:  
Gianni Malabarba collection, Italy

Literature:  
*ENEA*, Flash Arts Publishing, Rome, 1972, ill. p. 91  
Signed and dated with archive no. 2087 on reverse

*Untitled*  
1968

White painted corn on board  
48.5 x 69 x 6.5 cm  
19 x 27  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches

## LIST OF WORKS

- p. 9 *Untitled*  
1934  
Plaster on board  
63 x 46 x 1 cm  
24  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 18  $\frac{1}{8}$  x  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches
- p. 10 *Untitled*  
1934  
Plaster on board  
69 x 48 x 0.5 cm  
27  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 18  $\frac{7}{8}$  x  $\frac{1}{8}$  inches
- p. 11 *Untitled*  
1934  
White plaster on wood  
130 x 72.5 x 5.5 cm  
40  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 28  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 2  $\frac{1}{8}$  inches
- p. 12 *Untitled*  
1938  
Plaster on wood  
33.5 x 57.5 x 2 cm  
13  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 22  $\frac{1}{2}$  x  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches
- p. 13 *Untitled*  
1945  
Plaster on board  
49 x 40 x 0.5 cm  
19  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 15  $\frac{3}{4}$  x  $\frac{1}{8}$  inches
- p. 14 *Untitled*  
1954  
White painted corn bracts  
50 x 23 x 2 cm  
19  $\frac{5}{8}$  x 9 x  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches
- p. 15 *Untitled*  
1954  
White painted bark on board  
31 x 53 x 3 cm  
12  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 20  $\frac{7}{8}$  x 1  $\frac{1}{8}$  inches
- p. 16 *Untitled*  
1954  
White painted bark on board  
50 x 71 x 4 cm  
19  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 28 inches
- p. 17 *Untitled*  
1957  
Bobbin and twine assemblage on board  
60 x 75 x 10 cm  
23  $\frac{5}{8}$  x 29  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 4 inches
- p. 18 *Untitled*  
1959  
Plaster on board  
35 x 52 x 0.5 cm  
13  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 20  $\frac{1}{2}$  x  $\frac{1}{8}$  inches
- p. 19 *Untitled*  
1960  
Handmade nails on board  
54.5 x 62 x 10 cm  
21  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 24  $\frac{3}{8}$  x 4 inches
- p. 20 *Untitled*  
1968  
White painted corn on board  
48.5 x 69 x 6.5 cm  
19 x 27  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches

## BIOGRAPHY

- 1908  
Born in Soncino, Italy 20 November.  
Starts painting very early under the guidance of his father (Annibale Ferrari), a painter.
- 1924-28  
Attends the Art College in Brera.  
Breaks off his studies for military service.
- 1929  
Takes part in the “Mostra Nazionale di Bolzano”.
- 1930  
Returns to Soncino at his father’s death and carries on his restoration and fresco-painting activities.  
He had previously contributed to the restoration of the San Angelo Church (Milan) and the San Marco Church (Milan): both works had been commissioned by the Soprintendenza ai Monumenti.  
He then perfects his preparation by attending the lectures in Brera and the Scuola Superiore d’Arte di Milano (College of Fine Arts).  
His first informal experiments date back to this period.
- 1932  
Takes part in the “Mostra Provinciale di Cremona” with tempera and plaster works. Lectures on plaster and stucco work at the Scuola di Disegno di Soncino.  
During this period despite a few figurative works, the artist becomes more and more abstract and informal.
- 1933  
Obtains teaching qualification.
- 1934  
One-man show at the “Bottega d’Arte Giano”, Soresina. The white plaster works meet with no success. In this show he sells two works.  
Carries on however his research in his studio: compositions with corn bracts, the bark of trees, wood-shavings, corks, ropes, twines, ears of wheat, etc.
- 1937  
Moves his studio into the Palazzo Meroni-Manzoni, where he will reside until 1958. In this studio, in the early 50’s, Piero Manzoni, still very young, starts associating with Enea Ferrari.
- 1938  
Second one-man show at the “Bottega d’Arte Giano”, Soresina.
- 1942  
Recalled for military service.
- 1943  
One-man show at the “Galleria dei Mille”, Bergamo.

1945  
Exhibition at the "Galleria dell'Associazione Artisti Bresciani". Brescia.

1949  
Carries out large plaster pannels in the house of the poet, Beppe Consoland in Pandino.

1950  
Takes part in a group show organised in Cremona by the ADAFA.

1951  
As from this date takes part in every edition of the "Mostra d'Arte di Castelleone".

1952  
Frontal restoration of the paintings of the domes in Soncino.

1953  
Restoration work at the Castle of Soncino. Reconstruction of the drawbridge of the Castello Sforzesco according to the original plans and workings.

1954  
Participates in the "Mostra d'Arte Contemporanea", for the 2nd Fiera Mercato, in the Castello Sforzesco of Soncino, 6 compositions with corn bracts, bark and plaster. The cover of the exhibition catalogue (which also included some of Piero Manzoni's first works) featured two white plaster works by Enea.

1960  
One-man show at the "Bottega d'Arte", Crema.

1962  
Exhibition in Soresina.  
From 1930 to 1970 takes part in the shows organised at the end of every school-year in the premises of the Scuola d'Arte di Soncino, of which he is the Principal since 1934.

1969-70  
Takes part in the 1st and 2nd editions of the "Premio Nazionale d'Avanguardia Piero Manzoni" in the Castello Sforzesco of Soncino.

1970  
Takes part in the show "Intesa e protesta nella segnaletica", Cunardo, in the "Mostra d'Arte Contemporanea d'Avanguardia", Orzinuovi and in the "Premio Juan Miro", Barcelona.

November 1970  
One-man show at the Galleria Cenobio-Visualità, Milan, with works dating from 1934 to 1954.

1971  
One-man shows at the Galleria La Tartaruga, Roma; Studio C. Brescia; Galerie M, Bochum; Galerie Loehr, Frankfurt; Galerie Ernst, Hanover.

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